

IMPORT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORNAMENTAL FISH

On the 5th March this year the GM Inspectorate and the Fish Health Inspectorate issued a notice alerting importers and retailers of tropical fish that genetically modified fish may illegally be available for sale in the UK. All importers and retailers were requested not to import or trade any red danios or other recently available coloured/fluorescent danio varieties pending the results of investigations.

We can now confirm that genetically modified *Danio rerio* zebrafish appear to have been illegally marketed by at least one retail outlet in Great Britain. Analytical tests undertaken by the Central Science Laboratory have revealed that the fish are genetically modified to express genes for red fluorescent protein and green fluorescent protein. The fish were marketed as coral pink danios and display a uniform and distinct red/pink body.

This finding is consistent with reports from the authorities in Holland and Germany who also recently confirmed the presence of genetically modified danios in their ornamental fish trade.

It is an offence for any person to import or acquire, release or market any genetically modified (GM) organisms within Great Britain without the consent of the Secretary of State, the Welsh Assembly Government or the Scottish Executive, provided under Article 111 of The Environmental Protection Act 1990. There are currently no GM fish authorised for release in Europe or Great Britain, consequently anyone who knowingly imports, acquires, releases or markets such fish is committing an offence under this legislation.

This notice is to inform all importers and retailers that they must not import, acquire, release or market fish meeting the description of coral pink danio or anything sounding similar, e.g. red danio, or any other recently available coloured or fluorescent danio varieties, unless they are certain that these fish are not genetically modified. Monitoring activities are now in place and any fish suspected to be genetically modified will be seized. Anyone appearing to breach these requirements may be prosecuted.

Anyone who believes they have taken possession of genetically modified fish, or requires further information, or is able to furnish additional information on the availability of coloured danios should contact either:

The GM Inspectorate at the Central Science Laboratory on 01904 462223, or email gm-inspectorate@csl.gov.uk

Or the Fish Health Inspectorate at Cefas Weymouth on 01305 206673/4, or email fish.health.inspectorate@cefas.co.uk

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Hugo
Head of GM Inspectorate

11th May 2007



CENTRAL SCIENCE
LABORATORY

Sand Hutton • York

YO41 1LZ • UK

Tel: +44 (0)1904 462000

Fax: +44 (0)1904 462111

Website: www.csl.gov.uk

E-mail: science@csl.gov.uk



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